

SENATE—Wednesday, March 28, 2001

The Senate met at 9:15 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable GEORGE ALLEN, a Senator from the State of Virginia.

PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Lloyd John Ogilvie, offered the following prayer:

Almighty God, Sovereign of our beloved Nation, and the source of the absolutes that knit together the fabric of character, we ask You to stir up the banked embers on the hearth of the hearts of people across our land. Rekindle the American spirit.

We allow our hearts to be broken by what breaks Your heart in the American family, schools, and society. The roots of our greatness as a nation are in the character of our people. Our Founders' passion for justice, righteousness, freedom, and integrity gave birth to a unique nation. Now, at this crucial time in our history, we ask You to bless the Senators as they set an example to encourage parents, teachers, coaches, spiritual leaders, and all who impact our youth with the ethical values which transcend the divisions of race, creed, politics, gender, the rich, and the poor. You are our Adonai, our Elohim, Yahweh, our Lord and Saviour. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Honorable GEORGE ALLEN led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mr. THURMOND).

The legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 28, 2001.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable GEORGE ALLEN, a Senator from the State of Virginia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

STROM THURMOND,
President pro tempore.

Mr. ALLEN thereupon assumed the chair as Acting President pro tempore.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

SCHEDULE

Mr. LOTT. Mr. President, today the Senate will immediately resume consideration of the Thompson amendment regarding the hard money limit, or individual and other contributions that are referred to as hard money. There will be up to 30 minutes of debate prior to the vote at 9:45 a.m. Following the vote, another amendment regarding hard money is expected to be offered by Senator FEINSTEIN. Senators should expect that there will be a vote, or votes, every 3 hours during the day and, hopefully, maybe some of that time will be yielded back and we won't have to use the full 3 hours on each amendment.

Hopefully, we can make real progress today. Everybody will agree that we have had full, and some would even say good, debate on this subject. I think it has been handled in a fair way. I think we are going to be tested this morning in the next 3 hours to see if that will be the way it continues. I am concerned about things I have heard regarding how the Thompson amendment and others would be considered. I urge the Senate to continue in not only the words of the unanimous consent agreement but in the spirit and make sure each Senator has an opportunity to have his or her amendment fully considered and fairly voted upon.

If that doesn't occur, then I think it could lead to other complications, and I will be prepared to become engaged in trying to make sure that this remains on an even keel.

Mr. President, I yield the floor.

RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

BIPARTISAN CAMPAIGN REFORM ACT OF 2001

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of S. 27, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 27) to amend the Federal Election Campaign Act of 1971 to provide bipartisan campaign reform.

Pending:

Specter amendment No. 140, to provide findings regarding the current state of campaign finance laws and to clarify the definition of electioneering communication.

Thompson amendment No. 149, to modify and index contribution limits.

AMENDMENT NO. 149

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will now resume consideration of the Thompson amendment No. 149 on which there shall be 30 minutes for closing remarks.

Who yields time? The Senator from Tennessee, Mr. THOMPSON.

Mr. THOMPSON. Mr. President, as was stated, we are here to consider our amendment to modestly raise the hard money limits that can be contributed to candidates. We should keep our focus on what this whole reform debate is about; that is, the concern over large amounts of money going to one individual and the appearances that come about from that.

What we are doing today is a part of helping that. It is not enough just to get rid of soft money and leave the hard money unrealistically low limitations where they are. Everything will go to the independent groups. We see how powerful they are now, and they are getting more and more so.

Under the first amendment, they have the right to do that. It will be even more in the future when and if we do away with soft money. Therefore, we should not keep squeezing down the most legitimate, on top of the table, limited, full disclosed parts of our campaign system, which is the hard money system which is now at \$1,000.

It has not been indexed for inflation since 1974. All we are asking is that we come up to limits, not even bringing it up to inflation, which would turn the \$1,000 limitation into about a \$3,550 limitation. We are not suggesting that. We are saying let's go to \$2,500, substantially below inflation and the other numbers commensurate with that.

If those limits did not have corruption significance and appearance problems in 1974, they do not today because we are actually giving the candidate less purchasing power than we gave him in 1974, and the reason we are having to bump it up in the increments that we are is because we have not done anything for all of that time.

I think the most salutary benefit of raising the hard money limits just a little bit and to the parties just a little—let the parties have some money to do the things they are supposed to do—no corporate money, no union money, no soft money, but hard money to the parties. Let them be raised, too,